

German opposition to the nazis 1939-45 essay sample



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Youth Movements:

1. Most Young people in Germany were loyal members of either the Hitler Youth or German Girl's League- Both compulsory as of 1939. Wrong to believe the regime won over entire Nazi youth.
2. Some youngsters objected to strong indoctrination and discipline, preferring instead to form non-conformist youth groups and gangs who engaged in protest against the N. R.

Edelweiss Pirates:

1. Emerged late 1930s, located in the working class districts in a number of west German towns: Dusseldorf, Cologne most notably.
2. Consisted primarily of 12-18 year old boys who had no distinctive political ideology but great antipathy towards the grim uniformity of the Hitler Youth and the general lack of freedom in Nazi Germany.
3. Spontaneous movement.
4. " Eternal war on the Hitler Youth". Breaking free from Nazi Discipline, the Edelweiss Pirates went on long hikes, carrying rucksacks. They took camping excursions at a time where the N. R was placing higher strain on travel limitations. Sing Parodies of Hitler Youth / tell dirty jokes.
5. It was difficult for the Nazi authorities to distinguish their behaviour from less politically challenging forms of juvenile delinquency.

6. It was during the war years, 1939-45, with a reduction in parental supervision and the severe disruption to local leisure facilities caused by increased allied raids that the 'subversive' activities of the Edelweiss Pirates grew markedly.

7. In the cities, they took part in pitched battles against the Hitler Youth and in the subways, daubed slogans such as, "Down with Hitler – We want Freedom".

8. Shielded army deserters. Engaged with other groups, communists, in acts of industrial sabotage. Shows how youthful rebellion increasingly turned to active resistance.

9. Gestapo crackdown on Pirates. December 1942, 739 Pirates were arrested in 4 major German cities. Placed in re-education camps designed to instill conformity to Nazi Ideals.

10. 1944 – SS "Decree on the combating of Youth Gangs". Cologne public hangings.

Swing and Jazz Movements:

1. Desire to listen to banned American music, particularly swing popularised by the Glenn Millar Orchestra, and jazz by Louis Armstrong. Himmler highly opposed to these movements.

2. Illegal dances attended by up to 6, 000 youths. Created illegal clubs at which 'hot-jazz' was played. The Harlem Club

3. Nazi imposed ban on public dances 1940.

4. No burning desire to offer political resistance to N. R, but rather by youth exuberance to have a good time. “ We are not against the Nazis, they are against us.”

5. Interpreted as a lack of patriotism. Sought a culturally permissive society.

Communist Movement:

1. By the late 1930s, the underground communist movement had been severely weakened by the actions of the Gestapo. The exiled leaders of the KPD decided to rethink its strategy. At the Berne conference of 1939 a major review took place, which resulted in a demand for the creation of a ‘ popular front’ consisting of all anti-fascist forces outside and inside of Germany. However, this policy took a large setback when later that year Stalin’s Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany.

2. Revival of opposition after Operation Barbarossa, 1941. Number of anti-Nazi leaflets seized by the Gestapo rose from 62 in February to 10, 227 in October.

1941 saw the rise of numerous groups affiliated with communism, which were later destroyed around 1942:

1. Red Orchestra: Led by Harnack and Boysen. Not members of KPD, but sympathetic to communist cause. Main objective was to pass on secrets of the German war effort to the Soviet Union. Eventually shut down by Gestapo.

2. Baum Group: Consisted of around 30 pro-communist Jews, all of who worked at the Siemens plant in Berlin. Produced a monthly newssheet entitled “ The Way Out”. Anti-Soviet exhibition burn down.

White Rose Group:

1. Went beyond mere dissent.
2. Led by brother and sister Hans and Sophie Scholl.
3. Series of leaflets printed 1942-43 and distributed initially among the students of Munich University but in time to many towns of central Germany.
4. Content was highly political and openly condemned the moral and spiritual values of the Nazi regime.
5. One of the early leaflets entitled, “ Isn’t every decent German today ashamed of the Government?”

Brave gesture of defiance and self-sacrifice. Low security = infiltrated by Gestapo.

Churches:

1. Refrained from widespread resistance to the regime.
2. Instead, opposition rested on the actions of individuals:
 1. Bishop Galen of Munster: Outspoken sermon attacked euthanasia policy in 1941.

2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Opposition started as religious dissent but, from 1940, developed into political resistance, which brought him into direct contact with elements of the conservative elite.

3. Niemöller: Founder of Confessional Church.